

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

January 16, 2007

To the Honorable, the City Council,

**Subject: Prospect Street Rezoning Petition**

The Planning Board is pleased to submit for consideration the Prospect Street Rezoning Petition. This petition contains zoning recommendations developed following a series of three public meetings held by the Community Development Department in 2006 focusing on the Prospect Street corridor. These meetings invited residents, workers, businesses, institutions, and other users of the corridor to work with City staff to identify issues and develop a vision and planning recommendations for the corridor.

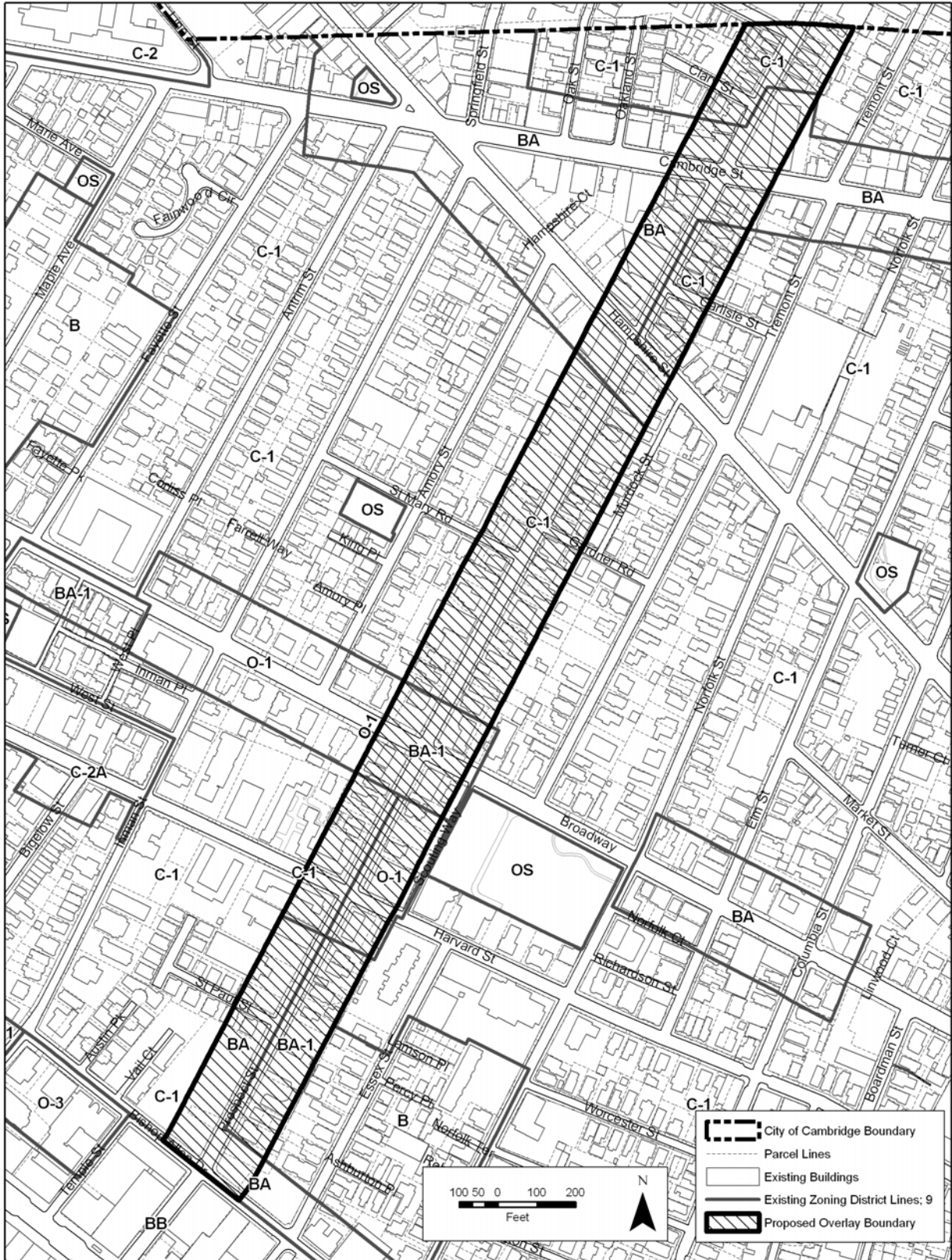
The Prospect Street Corridor extends from Bishop Allen Drive in the south to the Cambridge-Somerville line in the north (see attached map). The corridor encompasses 100 feet on either side of Prospect Street. The proposed zoning is intended to accomplish the goals identified during the public meetings -- improving the sidewalk/pedestrian experience and the image and character of the corridor, while maintaining the positive qualities of Prospect Street, including its mixed-use nature. The following are principal elements of the proposed rezoning:

- Permitted uses, densities and heights along the corridor would remain unchanged.
- An overlay district would be created to establish the corridor as an area of special planning concern – future development of 2,000 sq. ft. or more would require a public meeting and non-binding development consultation with staff.
- New front setback (3 feet) and open space (15%) requirements would be created in the business districts.
- A 7-foot landscape buffer would be required between at-grade parking and the sidewalk.
- New urban design standards and guidelines would address building design, site design, and landscaping to improve the image of the corridor and enhance the pedestrian experience.

The Planning Board believes that, over time, this rezoning will help guide positive transformation along Prospect Street over time.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

Hugh Russell, Vice-Chair



PROSPECT STREET OVERLAY DISTRICT BOUNDARY

## A. TEXT CHANGES

Amend the Text of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge as follows:

**1. Amend Article 19.000, Section 19.46 by adding the *Prospect Street Overlay District* to the list of Areas of Special Planning Concern.**

### ARTICLE 19.000 PROJECT REVIEW

**19.46** *Areas of Special Planning Concern.* The following zoning districts shall be considered Areas of Special Planning Concern: Business A-1 and Business A-2 Districts, the Parkway Overlay District, the Kirkland Place Overlay District, the Harvard Square Overlay District, the Central Square Overlay District, The Cambridgeport Revitalization Development District, the Massachusetts Avenue Overlay District, Special District 12, Special District 13, Special District 14, the Memorial Drive Overlay District, and the Prospect Street Overlay District.

**2. Amend Article 20.000 – Overlay Districts by creating a new Prospect Street Overlay District, Section 20.200.**

### ARTICLE 20.000 OVERLAY DISTRICTS

20.10	TRANSITION OVERLAY DISTRICTS
20.11	HAMMOND AND GORHAM STREETS TRANSITION OVERLAY DISTRICT
20.12	KIRKLAND PLACE TRANSITION OVERLAY DISTRICT
20.20	MIXED USE RESIDENTIAL OVERLAY DISTRICT (MXR)
20.30	moved to Article 21.20
20.40	EASTERN CAMBRIDGE HOUSING OVERLAY DISTRICT (ECHO)
20.50	HARVARD SQUARE OVERLAY DISTRICT and HARVARD SQUARE HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT
20.60	PARKWAY OVERLAY DISTRICT
20.70	FLOOD PLAIN OVERLAY DISTRICT
20.80	MEMORIAL DRIVE OVERLAY DISTRICT
20.90	ALEWIFE OVERLAY DISTRICTS 1-6
20.100	NORTH MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE OVERLAY DISTRICT
20.200	<u>PROSPECT STREET OVERLAY DISTRICT</u>
20.300	CENTRAL SQUARE OVERLAY DISTRICT
20.400	PATHWAY OVERLAY DISTRICT

*[Note: Institutional Overlay Districts are located in Section 4.50 of the Zoning Ordinance and the Eastern Cambridge Development Rights Transfer Districts are located in Article 21.000]*

**Note:** A new Section 20.200, Prospect Street Overlay District, is proposed

## **20.200 PROSPECT STREET OVERLAY DISTRICT**

**20.201 *Establishment and Scope.*** There is hereby established the Prospect Street Overlay District which shall be governed by the regulations and procedures specified in this Section 20.200. It is the intent of this section that these regulations will apply to a single area described generally as Prospect Street and certain abutting portions of the neighborhood around it.

**20.202 *Purpose.*** It is the purpose of this Section 20.200 to augment base zoning regulations in the District in order to create a more harmonious and consistent image for the area along Prospect Street and adjacent areas, to encourage good building design and site development which enhances the pedestrian amenities along the street, to ensure that future development and redevelopment is compatible with the character of the abutting neighborhoods, to encourage the retention of existing buildings of historic value and of uses which serve the abutting neighborhoods.

**20.203 *Applicability.*** The Prospect Street Overlay District shall be an overlay district on the zoning map established by Section 3.20.

**20.203.1** The buildings and land uses within said district shall be controlled by the pertinent regulations of the base zoning district, except as they may be modified by the requirements of this Section 20.200 which shall apply in addition to regulations imposed by the base zoning districts.

### **20.204 *Dimensional Standards in the Prospect Street Overlay District.***

**20.204.1 *Modifications to the Definition of Gross Floor Area.*** Notwithstanding the definition of Gross Floor Area contained in Article 2.000 - Definitions, the following shall not be included as part of the gross floor area of any building in the Overlay District:

1. Enclosed bays and other small projections from the principal wall plane of a building normally included as gross floor area, provided they are forty-two (42) inches or less in depth and further provided that the following conditions are met:
  - a. The maximum width of the projection does not exceed six (6) feet in length;
  - b. No more than fifty (50) percent of the area of each principal wall plane is covered with such projections.
2. Temporary awnings over entrances, porches, or outdoor eating areas, permanent canopies over building entrances.

**20.204.2 *Minimum Green Area Open Space in the Prospect Street Overlay District.*** If such Open Space is not required under the applicable base zoning district for some or all permitted uses, a minimum of 15% Green Area Open Space shall be required. This Green Area Open Space may serve to help meet the requirement for Useable Open Space in any applicable base zoning district provided all dimensional standards for Useable Open Space are met. Notwithstanding the definition of Green Area Open Space in Article 2.000, Definitions, a paved expansion of three (3) feet wide or less of the adjacent public sidewalk devoted exclusively to pedestrian use, as permitted in Section 20.204.32, may serve to help meet this Green Area Open Space requirement.

**20.204.3    *Yard Requirements***

**20.204.31** *Minimum Yard Requirements in the Prospect Street Overlay District.* If no front yard is required under the applicable base zoning district, the minimum required front yard for that portion of a lot fronting Prospect Street or another street in a business district shall be three (3) feet.

**20.204.32** *Restrictions in Required and/or Provided Yards.* The area between the principal wall plane of a building and a public street, whether required or provided, shall be devoted to any combination of the following: Green Area Open Space as defined in Article 2.000 of this Ordinance, an expansion of the adjacent public sidewalk, or a landscaped or paved area devoted exclusively to pedestrian use and extending along the entire length of the lot facing the street.

Areas devoted to vehicular use, including canopies over fuel pumps at Automobile Service Stations, are prohibited from this area with the exception of access drives leading directly to parking facilities located elsewhere on the site. Such drives shall be limited per lot to a maximum of one two-way access drive (and associated curb cut) or two one-way access drives (and associated curb cuts) per lot shall be permitted. Any access drive shall not exceed thirty (30) feet in width in non-residential districts for a two-way drive or fifteen (15) feet in width for a one-way drive, and twenty (20) feet in width in residential districts for two-way drives and ten (10) feet in width for a one-way drive.

The required Green Area Open Space, landscaping or other paved area devoted to pedestrian uses shall be located at the mean grade of abutting public streets at the property line, unless an exception is granted under the provisions of Section 20.208 below. Nothing in this Section 20.200 shall prohibit customary landscape features, elements and grading that may vary the grade of the required setback above that of the adjacent street or park, provided the setback remains essentially at grade.

**20.204.33** Notwithstanding the provisions of Sections 20.204.31 and 20.204.32 above or any provision of Article 6.000, any on grade open parking facility shall be set back from front lot line by at least seven (7) feet. Such setback shall be landscaped as required in Section 20.204.32 above.

**20.205    *Use Restrictions***

**20.205.1** The ground (first) floor of that portion of a building facing a public street or public park shall consist of Gross Floor Area devoted to any one or combination of the following active uses: Residential (Section 4.31), Office (Section 4.34), retail business (Section 4.35), Institutional (Section 4.33), but specifically excluding as a permitted use or activity mechanical rooms, Gross Floor Area in structured parking, and canopies over fuel pumps at Automobile Service Stations. Additionally, such active uses on the ground floor shall meet the following conditions:

- a. At least eighty (80) percent of the floor elevation of the ground (first) floor shall be no higher than the four (4) feet above the mean grade of the adjacent public sidewalk or public park, at the property line, except that Retail Business uses in new construction shall be located at mean grade; and
- b. The use shall have a depth of at least twenty (20) feet.

**20.205.2** Where service and repair of cars is permitted in the base district, repair work shall be conducted within a building and parking of vehicles awaiting repair shall be screened from the sidewalk and from neighboring residential development by a fence or vegetation.

**20.206**     ***Design Standards***

**20.206.1**     *Building Facades.* Building facades shall be designed to enhance the visual quality of the Overlay District, create an environment pleasant and inviting for the pedestrian and compatible with the residential neighborhoods in close proximity to the district. The following standards shall apply to any building constructed after December 1, 2006; a building constructed before December 1, 2006, which in whole or in part meets the requirements of this Section 20.206.1, shall not be altered so as to increase the degree of non-conformity with this Section.

- a. Where office and/or retail uses are accommodated on the ground floor each separately leased space shall have an individual public entrance onto the abutting street where any portion of the space fronts towards the street; and
- b. Facades facing a public right of way, a public park, or designated city landmark building, or building in a local historic district or neighborhood conservation district, on an abutting lot, shall consist of a minimum twenty-five (25) percent clear glass in total for the facade, with clear glass increased to fifty (50) percent on the ground floor where retail and office uses are established. The maximum amount of clear glass permitted shall be seventy-five (75) percent of the facade. Reflective and opaque glass shall be prohibited.
- c. Where the façade of the ground floor is required to have a minimum of 50% clear glass, that glass shall be distributed on the façade such that at least seventy-five percent of the requirement is located below the midpoint between the finished floor and the underside of the joists above.
- d. For the purposes of this Section 20.206.1, the area of the façade of any given floor shall be measured vertically from the finished interior floor to the underside of the structural joist of the floor above.

**20.206.2**     *Landscape.* Front yards of buildings shall be landscaped to enhance the pedestrian experience along Prospect Street. To the extent practicable, shade trees should be incorporated along the sidewalk. The following standard shall apply:

For any new development or redevelopment on a lot, an existing or new tree shall be required, on the lot within ten (10) feet of the public sidewalk or in the public sidewalk, for each twenty-five (25) feet of lot frontage along Prospect Street.

**20.207**     ***Divergence from Standards***

Divergence from the standards specified in Sections 20.204 - 20.206 may be allowed by issuance of a special permit from the Planning Board. The Board shall grant such a permit upon its determination that the development proposed will better serve the objectives of this Section 20.200 than if the standards were followed and that the criteria specified in Section 10.43 will be satisfied.

The Board shall be guided in its determination by *Prospect Street Design Guidelines* and other such guidelines as may be established for the Prospect Street Overlay District. This Section 20.207 is intended for variations from the standards which may be appropriate in specific locations and circumstances and where careful design detail is a controlling factor.

### **20.208     *Area of Special Planning Concern***

The Prospect Street Overlay District shall be considered an area of special planning concern. Notwithstanding the provisions in Section 19.43.1 – Applicability of Large Project Review Procedure, in the Prospect Street Overlay District the Large Project Review Procedure shall apply to any development proposal containing Gross Floor Area of two thousand (2,000) square feet or more but less than fifty thousand (50,000) square feet , unless such development is exempt by virtue of the provisions of Section 19.45.

For parcels that fall within both the Prospect Street Overlay District and the Central Square Overlay District, this Large Project Review Consultation shall be conducted by the Central Square Advisory Committee.

Before issuance of any special permit for development proposed within the Prospect Street Overlay District that is subject to the Large Project Review Procedure or any special permit required in this Section 20.200, Section 11.10 - Townhouse Development, Section 4.26 – Multifamily Special Permit, and Section 19.20 - Project Review, the Planning Board shall determine that the proposal is consist with the *Prospect Street Design Guidelines*.

### **20.209     *Prospect Street Design Guidelines***

New buildings and redevelopment of old buildings should contribute to improving the character of Prospect Street. While it is recognized that not every project will meet every guideline, it is expected that new development in the Prospect Street Overlay District should be broadly consistent with the following principles:

1. Street-level facades should include active uses such as residential units and entrances, shops, restaurant, cafes, exhibition space or display windows, or commercial lobbies and front doors.
2. Blank walls should be avoided along the street. Transparent materials and interior lighting should be used to maximize visibility of street level uses.
3. Principal building entrances should be located facing Prospect Street , where appropriate.
4. Buildings should create a consistent street edge, with setbacks used generally for stoops, porches, and front gardens in residential development or for café seating, benches, or small open spaces in commercial development.
5. Awnings and canopies are encouraged to provide shelter and to enliven the ground floor facade.
6. Where appropriate, buildings should be designed with individual units and front doors facing the street, including units on the lower levels of multi-family buildings.
7. Buildings should reflect a rhythm and variation appropriate to the urban context. Facades should be articulated as several smaller masses using different materials or colors, vertical breaks, bays, porches, stoops, and other architectural elements.

8. Variations in height and architectural elements such as parapets, cornices and other details are encouraged to create interesting and varied rooflines and to clearly express the tops of buildings.
9. Where possible, windows should be located facing the street to increase safety.
10. Loading activities should be located on side streets or service alleys, where possible.
11. Buildings should be designed to use natural resources and energy resources efficiently in construction, maintenance, and long-term operation of the building.
12. Rooftop mechanical equipment should be sited and shielded to limit visual and noise impacts.
13. Storage of trash should be sited and shielded to contain noise and visual clutter.
14. Lighting fixtures in surface parking lots should be designed to minimizing light spillover onto adjacent properties.



## B. MAP CHANGES

**Amend the Zoning Map of the City of Cambridge by creating a *Prospect Street Overlay District* for the following described area as provided in Section 3.20 of the Zoning Ordinance:**

1. An area bounded by a line, said line beginning at a point, said point being the intersection of the centerline of Bishop Allen Drive and a line 100 feet southeasterly of and parallel to the southeasterly sideline of Prospect Street on Assessors Plat #90;
2. Thence proceeding in a northeasterly direction along that line 100 feet southeasterly of and parallel to the southeasterly sideline of Prospect Street for approximately 3,400 feet to its intersection with the Cambridge/Somerville municipal boundary line on Assessors Plat #82;
3. Thence turning and proceeding in a westerly direction along the Cambridge/Somerville municipal boundary line for approximately 280 feet to its intersection with a line 100 feet northwesterly of and parallel to the northwesterly sideline of Prospect Street on Assessors Plat #83;
4. Thence turning and proceeding in a southwesterly direction along that line 100 feet northwesterly of and parallel to the northwesterly sideline of Prospect Street for approximately 3,250 feet to its intersection with the centerline of Bishop Allen Drive on Assessors Plat #107;
5. Thence turning and proceeding in a southeasterly direction along the centerline of Bishop Allen Drive for approximately 250 feet to its intersection with the line 100 feet southeasterly of and parallel to the southeasterly sideline of Prospect Street on Assessor Plat #90, the point of origin.

Including portions of even numbered lots 54 – 386 Prospect Street and odd numbered lots 61 – 385 Prospect Street.